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Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan

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Note by the Secretary-General

In its resolution 2007/26, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, through the Council, a report on the implementation of that resolution. The Assembly, in its resolution 62/181, also requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to it at its sixty-third session. The present report, which has been prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, is submitted in response to the resolutions of the Assembly and the Council.

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Report prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan*

Summary

The Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory and Syrian Golan continues to intensify the economic and social hardship of the Palestinian and Syrian people.

Attacks by Palestinian militants and the launching of rockets into Israeli cities from the Gaza Strip continue, as do Israeli military operations, together with measures of arbitrary detention, the disproportionate use of force, house demolitions, severe mobility restrictions and closure policies in the occupied Palestinian territory. However, there was a decline in Palestinian-Israeli violence in 2007 and an increase in intra-Palestinian violence, culminating in the takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas in June 2007.

Internal conflict in the occupied Palestinian territory has compounded existing hardships. After the Hamas takeover of Gaza, Israel imposed additional restrictions on the movement of goods and people into the Gaza Strip, which led to deteriorating conditions and shortages of basic commodities, including food, electricity and fuel. Increased restrictions on the operations of humanitarian agencies hindered the delivery of humanitarian aid in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The Israeli closure system, which restricts Palestinian access to health and education services, employment, markets and social and religious networks, led to increased poverty and humanitarian need in the occupied Palestinian territory. Israeli settlements, land confiscation and the construction of the barrier in the West Bank, contrary to the Geneva Convention and other norms of international law, isolate occupied East Jerusalem, bisect the West Bank and curtail normal economic and social life.

The ongoing occupation and expansion of settlements by Israel in the occupied Syrian Golan and the restrictions imposed on the Syrian citizens living there also continue, in violation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2007/26, the Economic and Social Council stressed the importance of reviving the Middle East peace process on the basis of Security Council resolutions, including 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1544 (2004), and the principle of land for peace as well as compliance with the agreements reached between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people. In the same resolution, the Economic and Social Council urged all parties to respect the rules of international humanitarian law and to refrain from violence against the civilian population in accordance with the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949. The Council stressed the need to preserve the national unity and the territorial integrity of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and to guarantee the freedom of movement of persons and goods in the territory, including the removal of restrictions on going to and from East Jerusalem, and the freedom of movement to and from the outside world. It also stressed that the wall being constructed by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, is contrary to international law and is isolating East Jerusalem and dividing up the West Bank and is seriously debilitating to the economic and social development of the Palestinian people, and called in this regard for full compliance with legal obligations laid out in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice rendered on 9 July 2004 (see A/ES-10/273 and Corr.1) and in General Assembly resolution ES-10/15. In that resolution, the Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan to all their natural and economic resources, and called upon Israel, the occupying Power, not to exploit, endanger or cause loss or depletion of those resources; it also reaffirmed that Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan, are illegal and an obstacle to economic and social development and called for the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly, through the Council, a report on the implementation of the resolution.

2. In its resolution 62/181, the General Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, including land and water, and called upon Israel, the occupying Power, not to exploit, damage, cause loss or depletion of, or endanger the natural resources in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan. The Assembly recognized the right of the Palestinian people to claim restitution as a result of any exploitation, damage, loss or depletion, or endangerment of their natural resources resulting from illegal measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The Assembly stressed that the wall being constructed by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, is contrary to international law and is seriously depriving the Palestinian people of their natural resources, and called in this regard for full compliance with the legal obligations stipulated in the 9 July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and in resolution ES-10/15. The Assembly called on Israel, the occupying Power, to cease the dumping of all kinds of waste materials in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan,

which gravely threaten their natural resources, namely the water and land resources, and pose an environmental hazard and health threat to the civilian populations. The Assembly further called upon Israel to cease its destruction of vital infrastructure, including water pipelines and sewage networks, which, inter alia, has a negative impact on the natural resources of the Palestinian people. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to it at its sixty-third session on the implementation of the resolution.

II. Occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem

Deaths and injuries

3. Israeli military operations in the West Bank and Gaza and attacks by Palestinian militants continued throughout 2007. The number of Palestinians killed as a result of the conflict declined from 678 in 2006 to 396 in 2007.[1] The majority (76 per cent) were killed in the Gaza Strip, with more than 40 per cent of those fatalities the result of targeted killings.

4. The total number of Palestinians injured in the conflict with Israel in 2007 was 1,843, down from 3,194 in 2006.[1] The majority (64 per cent) were injured in the West Bank, predominantly by the Israeli army. In the Gaza Strip, more than 70 per cent were injured during targeted killing or ground operations.

5. While the number of casualties of Israeli-Palestinian violence decreased by almost half from 2006 to 2007, internal Palestinian violence increased, owing to political discord between the two main Palestinian factions, Hamas and Fatah. The total number of Palestinian deaths due to internal violence in 2007 was 490, as compared with 146 in 2006 and 12 in 2005. Of those 490 fatalities, 454 occurred in the Gaza Strip. The number of injuries resulting from internal fighting increased from 130 in 2005 to 871 in 2006 and to 2,726 in 2007.[1]

6. While the purpose of the present report is to describe the effects of the Israeli occupation on the Palestinian people, it is important to note that in 2007 13 Israelis were killed in direct conflict-related incidents with Palestinian armed elements. During the same period, 322 Israelis were injured, some of them, in the West Bank, by other Israelis.

Arbitrary arrests and detentions

7. Administrative detention is legal under Israeli law, and military commanders in the West Bank are empowered to detain an individual for up to six months, extendable for unlimited additional six-month periods. Between 1999 and October 2001, the average number of Palestinians held in Israeli administrative detention was less than 20. After October 2001, the use of administrative detention began to increase. As at 31 December 2007, the total number of Palestinians held in Israeli prison facilities was 8,378. Of those, 842 were being held in administrative detention without charge or trial, as opposed to 34 Palestinians held in 2001.[2]

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[1] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *The Humanitarian Monitor*, No. 20 (December 2007).

[2] B'Tselem (see http://www.btselem.org/english/Administrative_Detention/Statistics.asp).

8. A monthly average of 445 Israeli army search operations and 409 detentions/arrests in the West Bank and 4 Israeli army search operations and 99 detentions/arrests in the Gaza Strip were reported by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

9. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reported that as at the end of December 2007, six West Bank staff members were being held by the Israeli authorities. In spite of repeated written requests, access to the detained staff has been denied. The Agency has not been provided with full records of the Israeli military court proceedings, nor has it been permitted to interview any of the detainees.

10. In the Gaza Strip, an UNRWA staff member was arrested by the Israeli forces on 23 August 2007 and remains in administrative detention. One additional staff member remained in custody following his arrest in August 2002.

Population displacement and the destruction and confiscation of property

11. Palestinians were displaced as a result of the destruction of property, the confiscation of land and the revocation of residency permits, as well as occasional deportation. Over the past 10 years, the Israeli authorities have demolished more than 2,200 residences, leaving more than 13,000 Palestinians homeless.[3] Between 1967 and 2006, 8,269 Palestinians had their residency rights revoked in occupied East Jerusalem. In 2006, 1,363 Palestinian residents of occupied East Jerusalem had their residency rights revoked, as compared with 222 in 2005 and 16 in 2004.[4]

12. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that 83 inhabited residential structures were demolished between February and December 2007. Those demolitions resulted in the displacement of more than 611 Palestinians, including 235 children. In all, 39 per cent of homes were demolished owing to the lack of building permits issued by the Israeli authorities in the West Bank.

13. Between February and December 2007, Israeli authorities demolished 114 other structures, primarily greenhouses, animal pens and uninhabited or partly built houses and water network facilities, mainly because of the lack of building permits; 85 per cent of those demolitions took place in the West Bank.

14. The ongoing construction of the barrier has contributed to population displacement throughout the West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem. On 29 October 2007, the entire community of Qassa, which is in the Hebron governorate and is located between the barrier and the Green Line, was displaced by the Israeli army. In all, 25 families, consisting of more than 180 people, including 47 children, were forcibly removed and deposited at Tarqumiya commercial checkpoint.[5]

15. In the Gaza Strip, there were 11 instances of damage caused by Israeli forces to UNRWA facilities and property in 2007, including to seven schools. On one occasion, Israeli soldiers entered an UNRWA school with two tanks, blindfolded and handcuffed two UNRWA guards and proceeded to vandalize the school, including by

[3] B'Tselem (see http://www.btselem.org/english/Planning_and_Building).
[4] B'Tselem (see http://www.btselem.org/english/Jerusalem/Revocation_Statistics.asp).
[5] Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights (see A/HRC/6/NGO/54).

urinating and defecating in the classrooms. In a separate incident, a school was hit by an Israeli shell, which broke through the outer wall and continued through an adjacent wall.

Barrier

16. Israel is continuing with the construction of the barrier, contrary to General Assembly resolution ES-10/15, in which the Assembly acknowledged the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice that the route of the barrier in the occupied Palestinian territory was contrary to international law.

17. The current planned length of the barrier, as approved by the Israeli Cabinet in April 2006, is 723 km — more than twice the length of the 320-km Green Line, the internationally recognized boundary between the West Bank and Israel. The planned length of the barrier has gradually increased: it was 670 km in 2005 and 703 km in 2006.[6] As of November 2007, some 56 per cent had been constructed and 9 per cent was under construction. Only approximately 20 per cent of the route follows the Green Line; most of it deviates from it, in some places by as much as 22 km, into the West Bank.

18. The route of the barrier follows Israeli settlements, dissecting the West Bank into dozens of enclaves. This fragmentation has had a negative effect on social and economic life for the vast proportion of Palestinian residents, who must compete with Israeli settlers for limited resources such as land and water, while their freedom of access and movement is restricted.

19. The western area between the barrier and the Green Line was declared a "closed zone" by military order in October 2003. The almost 10,000 Palestinians living in the closed area now require permanent resident permits in order to continue to live in their own homes and may leave their communities only through a gate in the barrier.[7] These Palestinians are cut off from familial and social networks as well as essential health and education services located on the eastern side of the barrier.

20. Non-resident Palestinians living east of the barrier who want to enter the closed zone to gain access to agricultural land and water resources must apply for visitor permits. Only approximately 20 per cent of the people who formerly worked the land in the closed area now hold permits. For those granted permits, the irregular placement and limited opening times of the gates further restrict access: of the 67 gates, only approximately 19 are open on a daily basis. Another 19 are open seasonally (usually for the olive harvest), and 29 are never open to Palestinians.

21. Israel has largely completed the construction of a 168-km segment of the barrier separating East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank.[8] Approximately 25 per cent of Palestinians living in occupied East Jerusalem are separated by the barrier from the city and from essential services to which they are entitled as residents. More than 30,000 Palestinians living in villages within the municipal boundaries are now outside the barrier. Neighbouring West Bank villages that were

[6] See A/62/75-E/2007/13, para. 33, and A/61/67-E/2006/13, para. 35.

[7] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *OCHA Special Focus: The Barrier Gate and Permit Regime Four Years on — Humanitarian Impact in the Northern West Bank* (November 2007).

[8] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *The Humanitarian Impact of the West Bank Barrier on Palestinian Communities: East Jerusalem*, Update No. 7 (June 2007).

once closely connected to occupied East Jerusalem, with populations of over 84,000, are also excluded by the barrier.

22. These Palestinians depend for treatment on the six non-government hospitals in occupied East Jerusalem, which receive over 3,000 referrals annually. Tightened restrictions have resulted in a 50 per cent drop in patient caseloads and are preventing essential staff from reaching medical facilities. The restrictions are also hampering the ability of 6,000 pupils and 650 teachers to reach their schools and hundreds of thousands of people in neighbouring towns and villages to gain access to their places of worship.

Mobility restrictions and closure policies, including access to humanitarian assistance

23. The closure regime, which covers both internal and external closure, impedes normal economic activity and is a main cause of the deteriorating humanitarian situation. External closure, in the form of control of crossings out of the West Bank, has become intimately linked with the construction of the barrier and is progressively sealing off the West Bank from Israel. Internal closure is controlled by Israel through the use of physical obstacles: earth mounds, trenches, roadblocks, gates, restricted and fenced-off roads and checkpoints.

24. The Palestinian export trade in particular is affected by the closure system. Goods must first pass through the internal closure system around the urban centres where they are produced and then exit the West Bank via a barrier terminal. The number of internal physical obstacles in the West Bank increased from 528 in January 2007 to 563 in December 2007. The number of fixed physical obstacles is augmented by flying checkpoints, of which there were on average an estimated 488 per month in 2007.

25. The closure system increases the cost of transporting basic commodities because of the long detours necessitated by roadblocks and the back-to-back system. In Nablus, the main commercial centre in the West Bank, only 120 trucks have permits allowing them to be driven outside the city. The majority of trucks must pass through the Awarta commercial crossing, currently the only back-to-back crossing inside the West Bank. There, goods are unloaded from one truck, searched, ferried through a barrier of concrete blocks, and loaded onto another truck on the other side of the barrier. Israel announced in 2007 that it intended to introduce a compulsory back-to-back system for goods throughout the West Bank.

26. Following the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip in mid-June 2007, Israel increased border closures and restrictions on the access of goods and people to and from the Gaza Strip. This near-total isolation resulted in shortages of food and medical and relief items, spare parts for critical health-care and water-sanitation installations and raw materials for commerce and industry in Gaza.

27. The Agreement on Movement and Access between the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel contains specific provisions for the movement of people and goods within the occupied Palestinian territory and outside it.

28. The first of the six points of the Agreement was the reopening of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt. From 1 January to 9 June 2007, Rafah was open for passengers travelling in both directions only 33 per cent of scheduled days and 24.4 per cent of scheduled hours. The Rafah crossing was closed completely on

10 June and has remained so, except for 3, 4 and 7 December, when it was opened for the departure of Palestinian pilgrims.[9] In January 2008, sections of the Rafah border crossing were blown open by Palestinian armed elements attempting to break the blockade. It was estimated that half of the 1.5 million residents of Gaza took the opportunity to cross into Egypt to buy supplies.[10] After talks between Hamas representatives and Egyptian officials, on 3 February 2008 Egyptian soldiers closed the gap, stopping any further crossing of the border into Egypt.

29. Since 12 June 2007, the Erez crossing has been closed to virtually all Palestinians wishing to leave Gaza other than a limited number of traders, aid workers and medical cases.[9] With the closure of the Erez and Rafah crossings, patients have been prevented from or delayed in gaining access to health care that is not available in the Gaza Strip. Moreover, hundreds of students with places at universities abroad, and Gazans with foreign residency, were delayed in leaving Gaza.

30. Karni, the principal crossing for goods, was open for only about 40 per cent of scheduled days in 2007. Imports into Gaza were increasingly restricted throughout the year, with a 67 per cent decrease between January and December 2007. Since 12 June 2007, the crossing has been closed, except for a single-lane conveyor belt, which functioned an average of two days per week for wheat and animal feed.

31. The Sufa crossing used to be the main passage point into Gaza for the import of aggregates used for construction. After mid-June 2007, Sufa was also used for importing humanitarian and commercial goods. However, no aggregates were allowed into Gaza in 2007, halting nearly all public infrastructure and maintenance projects. On 28 October 2007, Israel officially announced the closure of the Sufa crossing. Overall, the crossing remained open for approximately 60 per cent of scheduled days in 2007.

32. After the end of October 2007, Kerem Shalom became the only goods crossing in operation. On 2 December, Israel began to allow Palestinians with foreign residency or visas to exit Gaza through Kerem Shalom. As at 11 December, 920 persons had crossed, although 198 were refused entry to Egypt and sent back to Gaza.[11]

33. The target date for establishing bus convoys to link the West Bank with the Gaza Strip, in accordance with the Agreement on Movement and Access, was 15 December 2005. The target date for establishing truck convoys was 15 January 2006. As at the end of January 2007, neither target had been met.

34. On 28 October 2007, Israel began to limit the supply of fuel and spare parts entering Gaza. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that in November 2007 there was a 40 per cent decrease in the supply of petrol, a 49 per cent decrease in the supply of diesel and a 14 per cent decrease in the supply of industrial gasoline, which is necessary for the operation of the Gaza power plant and the water and sewerage systems.[11]

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[9] United Nations Report No. 54, Implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access (28 November-11 December 2007).

[10] BBC News, "Egypt reseals Gaza border breach", 3 February 2008 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7224734.stm).

[11] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *OCHA Special Focus: The closure of the Gaza Strip — the economic and humanitarian consequences* (December 2007).

35. The Gaza Strip requires about 240 megawatts of electrical power, of which 120 are supplied by Israel and 17 by Egypt. On 5 January 2008, the Gaza Power Generating Company, which has the capacity to produce 80 megawatts, reduced its power supply to the Gaza Strip by 23 megawatts, and on 20 January, it stopped producing electricity altogether when its fuel supplies became too low for it to continue operating. This resulted in daily power cuts of up to 8 hours — in some areas up to 12 hours. Fuel supplies were resumed on 22 January, allowing the power plant to produce 65 megawatts. As from that date, there were power cuts of 8 hours per day in central Gaza, 10 hours every two days in northern Gaza and 8 hours every two days in Gaza City.[12]

36. Humanitarian organizations have also faced further restrictions on the movement of people and goods through and into the occupied Palestinian territory. Owing to the closure of the Karni crossing, UNRWA has been forced to palletize its goods, including food commodities, and bring them into Gaza through the secondary crossings of Sufa and Kerem Shalom.

37. Prohibitions on the importation of building materials have resulted in the cessation of work on $213 million worth of United Nations building projects as well as on other, non-United Nations, projects, including the rehousing of refugees and Gazans living in dilapidated housing and the repair and construction of public infrastructure such as sewerage and drainage systems.

38. In the West Bank, UNRWA staff reported thousands of incidents of access being delayed or denied, a good many of which hindered the delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance in the form of food aid and medicines and the work of mobile health-care and food distribution teams. Regular programmes were affected because the movement of teachers, social workers and field office staff was impeded, and the imposition of curfews on West Bank camps, villages and towns further added to the disruption of agency services.

39. United Nations staff continue to face difficulties and lengthy delays crossing into Israel at the Erez checkpoint. The hours of operation of the checkpoint were significantly reduced in 2007, including complete closure between 2 p.m. on Fridays and 8 a.m. on Sundays.

Israeli settlements

40. More than 38 per cent of the West Bank consists of settlements, closed military areas or other related structures that are off-limits to Palestinians, or at least tightly restricted.[13] The settlements are linked to each other and to Israel by an extensive road network and encircled by the barrier, which encloses approximately 69 settlements, containing 83 per cent of settlers. Palestinians for the most part are either prevented from using those roads or have only restricted access to them. The roads have also fragmented the West Bank, breaking it up into a series of isolated enclaves to which Palestinians can gain access only via a network of alternative roads, checkpoints and bridges over or tunnels under roads reserved primarily for settlers.

[12] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Gaza closure: situation report", 18-24 January 2008.

[13] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *The humanitarian impact on Palestinians of Israeli settlements and other infrastructure in the West Bank* (July 2007).

41. There are currently 473,000 settlers living in the West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem (282,000 in the West Bank and 191,000 in East Jerusalem) in 132 settlements.[14] In addition, there are about 100 "outposts" — settlements that have not been authorized by the Government of Israel — populated by 3,000 Israeli settlers. In 2001, Israel promised to evacuate all outposts established after March 2001. To date, no outposts have been fully dismantled. The settler population continues to grow at a rate of 5.5 per cent a year, three times that of the population of Israel itself. The majority of new arrivals settle in the large settlement blocs west of the barrier. On the basis of the current growth rate, the settler population will double to nearly 900,000 in just 12 years.

42. As of December 2007, there were more than 4,000 dwelling units under construction in the West Bank.[15] A new settlement outpost, comprising 27 trailers, was under construction in February 2008 near the settlement of Eli, north of Ramallah, reportedly on land privately owned by Palestinians. In addition, in February 2008, it was reported that construction had been renewed without authorization in Maskiot in the Jordan valley and that 10 settler families had moved in.[16]

43. Israel planned significant settlement expansion in occupied East Jerusalem in 2007 in an attempt to establish an unbroken belt of settlement along the northern perimeter of East Jerusalem. A plan to expand the Giva Binyamin/Adam settlement by constructing 1,200 units for 7,000 people was reported. The new development will be linked with the settlement of Neve Ya'acov[17] in occupied East Jerusalem. A new settlement of between 11,000 and 13,000 units — accommodation for more than 60,000 people — was in the initial planning stages for the site of the Atarot airport, adjacent to the barrier and the Qalandiya checkpoint. If approved, it would be the largest settlement project in occupied East Jerusalem since June 1967. In addition, in February 2008 Israel announced that tenders would be issued for the construction of more than 1,000 new homes in the settlements of Har Homa and Pisgat Ze'ev.[18]

Natural resources, water and environment

44. The water supply and sanitation services for Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory are insufficient and unreliable in terms of quality. The overall daily average of water consumption per capita in the West Bank in 2007 was 60 litres, down from 65.3 litres in 2006. In the Gaza Strip, overall daily consumption in 2007 was 57.8 litres, down from 80.5 litres in 2006. This is far below the minimum standard recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) of 150 litres per day. In 2007, on average 35.2 per cent of households in the West Bank and 36.3 per cent of households in Gaza had piped water.[1]

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[14] Foundation for Middle East Peace, *Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories*, vol. 18, No. 1 (January-February 2008).

[15] Ibid., vol. 17, No. 6 (November-December 2007).

[16] *Ha'aretz*, "Construction continuing in West Bank settlements despite PM's pledge", 21 February 2008.

[17] Foundation for Middle East Peace, *Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories*, vol. 17, No. 2 (March-April 2007).

[18] BBC News, "Israel plans new settlement homes", 12 February 2008 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7240557.stm).

45. Owing to the lack of electrical power in Gaza as a result of the cuts in the fuel supply since October 2007 and the ban on the importation of spare parts, water wells and pumping stations throughout the Gaza Strip have been falling into disrepair or standing idle, with the result that 15 per cent of the population has been receiving water for only 1 or 2 hours, per day.[11] As at 21 January 2008, the water authority had only enough fuel to pump water from 40 of its 130 wells and sewage at 21 of its 33 pumping stations. As a result, as at 23 January, about 30 per cent of Gazans had limited access to running water[12] and about 35 million litres of sewage were entering the sea per day.[19]

46. In 2007, an average of 318 trees in the West Bank and 2,883 trees in the Gaza Strip were uprooted, burned or cut down by Israeli authorities or settlers per month. In the Gaza Strip, Israel levelled an average of 1,623 dunums of arable land per month. In the West Bank, an average of 131 dunums of land per month were requisitioned and an average of 126 dunums per month were levelled.[1]

Palestinian fiscal crisis

47. The Palestinian Authority is beginning to recover from the liquidity crisis that followed the formation of the Hamas-led Government early in 2006. The fiscal deficit for 2006 reached $1.2 billion, or 26 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). About $0.9 billion in expenditure arrears were accumulated, owed to Government employees, who received only 60 per cent of their regular salaries in 2006, as well as to the pension fund and private sector suppliers. The accumulation continued to rise to $1.3 billion (27 per cent of GDP) by the end of June 2007.[20]

48. Following the appointment of a caretaker Government in June 2007, the fiscal situation of the Palestinian Authority started to improve, particularly after the resumption of clearance revenues transfers by Israel in July, allowing monthly salary payments to be resumed and back payments to Palestinian Authority employees to be made.

Socio-economic indicators

49. Gross domestic product contracted by nearly 8 per cent in 2006. In 2007, rebounding economic activity in the West Bank offset the decline in private sector activity in Gaza, leading to a projected real growth in GDP of zero for 2007. Preliminary results show a slight rise in GDP to $4.2 billion in 2007 from $4.1 billion in 2006. On the other hand, GDP per capita is estimated to have declined by 5 per cent in 2007 compared with 2006, and almost by 40 per cent compared with 1999. Inflation for 2007 remains low, at about 3 per cent, as the indicator is tied to the shekel, which has gained against the dollar since 2006.[20]

50. Between January 2006 and June 2007, business productivity in Gaza fell to 46 per cent of capacity. With the tightening of the closure regime in June, there was a further drop in productivity to an average of 11 per cent of capacity.[21] Nearly 95 per cent of all industrial establishments (3,705 of 3,900) have closed down since

[19] Crisis Action, *The Gaza Strip: A Humanitarian Implosion*.

[20] International Monetary Fund, "Medium-term macroeconomic and fiscal framework for the West Bank and Gaza: report for the donors' conference", Paris, 17 December 2007.

[21] United Nations Development Programme, "The Gaza Strip: a private sector in decline", December 2007.

mid-June 2007.[19] The trade deficit has reached unprecedented proportions and stands at 73 per cent of GDP — 30 per cent higher than the 30-year average.

51. In the fourth quarter of 2007, the unemployment rate was 22.2 per cent, as compared with 10 per cent in the third quarter of 2000. The fourth-quarter unemployment rate was 29 per cent in Gaza and 19.2 per cent in the West Bank. According to the relaxed definition of unemployment, which includes discouraged workers, the overall rate of unemployment in the fourth quarter of 2007 was 28.8 per cent: 25.9 per cent in the West Bank and 35.3 per cent in Gaza.[22]

52. Poverty was estimated at 36.9 per cent in the second quarter of 2006, down slightly from 38.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2005, but up from 27.7 per cent in the first quarter of 2004.[1] The decrease in 2007 as compared with 2006 was due mainly to the resumption of Palestinian Authority salaries payments and international donor assistance, as well as to the fact that the local economy of the West Bank was able to generate enough private jobs to compensate slightly for those lost in Gaza. According to the income-based definition of poverty, poverty rates increased from 45 per cent in 2001 to 56.8 per cent in 2006: from 35.5 per cent to 49.1 per cent in the West Bank and from 64.7 per cent to 79.3 per cent in the Gaza Strip.

Public health and food insecurity

53. Given that only basic food goods are entering Gaza and that imports and exports have been shut down, dependency on agencies such as UNRWA and the World Food Programme for humanitarian aid in Gaza now stands at over 80 per cent, as compared with 63 per cent in 2006.[11] In 2007, about 60 per cent of the refugee population received emergency food aid. In addition, more than 25,000 families in the West Bank and approximately 3,000 families in the Gaza Strip received emergency cash assistance from UNRWA in 2007.

54. While some essential food items remain available, shortages of other items have caused drastic price increases. During 2007, the price of wheat flour increased by 97 per cent in the West Bank and 51 per cent in the Gaza Strip.[1] The price of other basic commodities in Gaza increased sharply during May and June 2007: baby milk by 30 per cent and rice by 20.5 per cent.[19] The rise in the consumer price index, which was relatively gentle given the sharp reduction in the supply of food to Gaza, is attributable to a decline in both supply and demand.[23] As poverty levels increase, families have fewer funds to spend on food items.

55. In the absence of regular fuel and electricity, supplies, the ability to provide essential and emergency health-care services rapidly diminished in the Gaza Strip in the latter part of 2007. After the cuts in electricity and fuel supplies at the beginning of December 2007, 11 of the hospitals operated by the Ministry of Health and most of the primary health-care centres shut down their emergency generators. Hospitals reported shortages of about 60 to 70 per cent in the diesel supplies required for generating electricity.[19] WHO reported that the average number of hours of daily

[22] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, labour force survey for the fourth quarter of 2007, March 2008.

[23] United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, "Socio-economic report", December 2007.

electricity in Gaza health-care facilities was 10 in North Gaza and Gaza City districts, 4 in Mid Zone and Khan Younis districts and 2 in Rafah district.

56. 2007 was marked by a shortage of drugs, with about 40 per cent of the items on the essential drug list at critical levels for most of the year. In the Gaza Strip, by December 2007, 100 of 416 items on the essential drug list were at level zero. The number of medical supply items at level zero was 203 in December 2007.[1]

57. In March 2007, a sewage infiltration pond in the Gaza Strip breached its banks and tens of thousands of cubic metres of raw sewage flooded a small village in northern Gaza, killing 5 people, injuring 25 and displacing about 2,000. The inability of municipalities to continue to remove solid waste resulted in additional illness and an infestation by vermin. UNRWA has been forced to support municipalities with over 100,000 litres of diesel each month for the fleets of vehicles required to collect solid waste.

58. As a result of strict closures and curfews in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, women trying to gain access to health care during pregnancy and childbirth were delayed in — and in some cases completely prevented from — obtaining the care they needed. An estimated 2,500 women per year give birth while attempting to reach a delivery facility. Food insecurity is also adversely affecting the health of women and children. According to the results of a study undertaken by UNRWA in September 2006, 57.5 per cent of children aged between 6 and 36 months and 44.9 per cent of pregnant women in Gaza are anaemic.

Youth and education

59. Overall enrolment in basic education has fallen from a peak of 96.8 per cent in 2000 to 91.2 per cent in the 2006-2007 school year.[24]

60. Over the years, chronic violence, underfunding, and disruptions have led to a near-collapse of the education sector in the Gaza Strip. UNRWA operates 214 schools for nearly 200,000 students in the Gaza Strip. Violence in 2007 led to 14,730 lost teaching days in UNRWA schools. The number of children who dropped out of school in Gaza is estimated to have reached 2,000 during the second half of 2007.[19] For the 2005-2006 school year, between 66 and 90 per cent of children in the Gaza Strip failed mathematics examinations, while between 28 and 61 per cent failed Arabic examinations.

61. In the West Bank, UNRWA schools lost 35 days during the 2006-2007 school year. Although examination scores showed an upward trend in the 2006-2007 school year, educational achievement continues to flag in the West Bank. For example, of students in the eighth grade, only 45 per cent passed mathematics examinations, 56 per cent passed science examinations and 69 per cent passed Arabic examinations.

62. As part of its strict embargo on products entering the Gaza Strip, Israel has prohibited the importation of paper, which is required for printing textbooks for children. Children did not receive textbooks on time in either the first or the second semester of the 2007-2008 school year, as paper entered Gaza only after the start of

[24] United Nations Children's Fund media release, "Schools re-open to darker, colder classrooms", 1 February 2008.

each semester. Furthermore, as many as 40 per cent of children in Gaza are suffering from insomnia and 34 per cent are suffering from anxiety.[25]

Status of women

63. The literacy rate for women was 89.8 per cent in 2006, an increase of 7 per cent from 2000. The literacy rate for men was 97.1 per cent, an increase of 2.9 per cent from 2000.[26]

64. The enrolment rate in basic education is higher for women than it is for men, but decreased from 98 per cent in 2000-2001 to 90 per cent in 2006-2007. Fewer women than men attain a higher degree: the percentage of women with bachelors degrees was 6.2 per cent in 2006, compared with 9.6 per cent for men.

65. The participation rate for women in the labour force was only 16.6 per cent in the second quarter of 2007, as compared with 67.8 per cent for men. The employment rate for women has increased, however, from 10.3 per cent in 2001.

66. Worsening socio-economic conditions in the Gaza Strip seem to be causing increased levels of violence against women. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, two in five women reported being victims of violence in Gaza in 2007, up from one in five in 2006. There were 12 honour killings in Gaza, up from 4 in 2004.[25]

III. Occupied Syrian Golan

67. The Syrian Golan, which measures about 1,250 km^2, has been under Israeli occupation since 1967. The decision of the Government of Israel to annex the occupied Syrian Golan was deemed illegal by the Security Council in its resolution 497 (1981). Israel prevents the return of the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan expelled in 1967, which at that time comprised approximately 130,000 Syrian citizens living in about 200 villages and farms. As of March 2007, the population of Syrian Arabs was down to an estimated 21,000 persons living in five main towns. The Golan also has about 20,000 Israeli settlers.[27]

68. In August 2007, the Syrian Arab Republic reported that the number of Israeli settlements in the Golan had increased to 45. As part of a new settlement campaign, plans were announced for the construction of 300 new housing units in the occupied Golan, and the land department of Israel put 2,500 dunums of land up for sale to settlers. In mid-April 2007, the Alonei Habashan settlement announced the sale of housing units built on the ruins of the Arab village of Juwayza, at a cost of $27,000 each.[28]

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[25] United Nations Children's Fund, "Humanitarian Action Update: Occupied Palestinian Territory", 17 December 2007.

[26] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Women and Men in Palestine: Issues and Statistics* (August 2007).

[27] International Committee of the Red Cross operational update, "ICRC activities in the occupied Golan", 22 March 2007.

[28] Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/62/360), para. 74.

69. As of August 2007, 15 Syrian citizens of the Golan were held in Israeli prisons, accused of resisting the occupation. A further two were arrested by the Israeli authorities at the end of July 2007, after a police raid on the villages of Majdal Shams and Buq'ata. The Israeli authorities have repeatedly refused requests from international institutions, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, to visit Syrian Arab prisoners.[29]

70. Landmines continue to pose a threat to Syrian Arab villagers of the occupied Golan. On 27 November 2006, in the unoccupied part of Quneitra, a mine in the form of a child's toy exploded, and two children from the village of Al-Jarran received injuries to the chest and eyes. In an area between Khan Arnbah village and Baath City, four children were injured on 23 December 2006 by the explosion of a mine that looked like a cube-shaped child's toy.[30]

71. According to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, Israel has embarked on a project to dispose of nuclear waste in the Golan, in an underground facility close to Mount Hermon. This claim has not been verified by any independent source.

72. According to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, Syrian citizens of the occupied Golan have restricted access to water. Farmers receive only 25 per cent of the amount of water they need to grow apples, which has a negative effect on the agricultural output of Arab land.[31] They are reportedly not permitted to dig wells or to build cisterns for the storage of rainwater or snow water. The Syrian residents are also prohibited from using the waters of Lake Mas'adah, which is diverted for the use of Israeli settlements.[32] According to information provided by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Israeli authorities impose disproportionately high taxes on Syrian Arab farmers in the Golan, sometimes equal to 50 per cent of the value of the crops being taxed. Through their assistance efforts, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and ICRC facilitated the transfer of about 10,000 tons of apples to Syrian markets through a system of back-to-back trucking.[31]

73. For the Syrian residents of the occupied Golan, travel to the Syrian Arab Republic for religious, educational or family purposes is severely restricted by the Israeli authorities. UNDOF and the ICRC provide assistance and coordination, working with both the Israeli and the Syrian authorities, to facilitate the passage of persons through the area of separation. During 2007, UNDOF assisted in the crossing of 670 students, 500 pilgrims, 2 brides and 5 other civilians. UNDOF also provided health-care services to 243 villagers and medical treatment to 116 civilians. In addition, UNDOF assisted in the handover from Israeli forces to the

[29] Ibid., para. 76.

[30] Ibid., para. 77.

[31] *The Situation of Workers of the Occupied Arab Territories* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2007). Appendix to the report of the Director-General, International Labour Conference, 96th session, 2007.

[32] Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/62/360), para. 75.

Syrian authorities of one Syrian civilian who had crossed into the Israeli-occupied Golan.[33]

74. The five Syrian Arab towns in the Golan have 12 schools that are overcrowded and ill-equipped such that they provide an unhealthy environment for children. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reports that Syrian Arab professionals, including medical doctors and pharmacists, are denied licences to work in the Golan, prompting many of them to migrate. Arab residents in the Golan are reportedly required to accept Israeli nationality if they wish to seek employment. Furthermore, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic asserts that Syrian Arab labourers in the Golan suffer from discrimination in favour of their Israeli counterparts, with comparatively poor working conditions and lower wages.

75. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has also reported that the Israeli authorities have prohibited the establishment of any Arab print press in the Golan and impose strict censorship on books and other printed materials. That claim has not been verified by any independent source.

IV. Conclusions

76. While the number of casualties of Israeli-Palestinian violence decreased by almost half compared with 2006-2007, a combination of intensified closures and sanctions imposed by Israel and increased Palestinian internal conflict led to the measurable deepening of the socio-economic crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory in 2007. All economic, social and public health indicators reveal that standards in living conditions are declining and that there is social and spatial dismemberment, growing despair and increased violence against fellow Palestinians. Residents of the Gaza Strip have become almost completely isolated from the outside world, with access to only basic commodities and humanitarian items.

77. Both the Security Council and the General Assembly have declared that the Israeli decision to annex the Golan is null and void.[34] Nevertheless, in 2007 Israel continued its expansion of settlements and violation of the rights of the Syrian residents of the occupied Syrian Golan.

78. The situation in the occupied Palestinian territory prompted the United Nations country team to launch the 2008 consolidated appeal, which, at $454 million, represents an 8.51 per cent increase from the level of the 2007 appeal. The 2008 consolidated appeal focuses on four main issues with a view to sustaining livelihoods and preventing further deterioration: (a) humanitarian aid; (b) the protection of civilians and the implementation of international humanitarian law; (c) humanitarian monitoring and reporting; and (d) the strengthening of United Nations humanitarian coordination. While those measures are aimed at stabilizing socio-economic conditions, they are not expected to contribute to the long-term improvement of such conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory.

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[33] Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (for the period from 2 December 2006 to 6 June 2007) (S/2007/331), paras. 3 and 4; report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (for the period from 7 June to 31 December 2007) (S/2007/698), paras. 3 and 4.

[34] Security Council resolution 497 (1981); General Assembly resolution 61/27.

79. In his message of 19 February 2008 to the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, the Secretary-General reiterated the United Nations position that only a permanent political settlement which ends the occupation and gives Palestinians their independence can fundamentally alter the economic and humanitarian problems of the Palestinian people. He stressed that the key ingredients for a breakthrough existed, pointing to bilateral negotiations and the support of donors. Finally, he expressed his belief that with the right mixture of wisdom, realism and political courage, historic progress towards the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, could be made.